Jacobus P. Thijsse’s Influence on Dutch Landscape Architecture

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Jacobus Pieter Thijsse (1865–1945), father of the ecological movement in the Netherlands, was born in a country which was late in being industrialized (Fig. 1). Until the middle of the nineteenth century the majority of the population in the Netherlands derived its income from agriculture, but this changed largely between 1860 and 1870 with an extraordinary growth of economic activities, mainly due to improved infrastructure, benefiting from the economic growth of neighboring Germany, and an intensified trade with the Dutch East Indies, due to the opening of new world markets. In a relatively short period the Netherlands became an industrial nation in which prosperity and population increased. From the 1860s to 1920 the population of the Netherlands doubled from 3.5 to 7 million people.

These changes had inevitable consequences for the internal political climate and for foreign policy. Internally this was reflected in a continual striving to extend the franchise, finally achieving proportional representation. Pressing recurring political issues were those relating to the educational system and different denominations, and the conditions of the common people and laborers. In 1894 a new socialist democratic party (S.D.A.P.) was founded, which was at first quite revolutionary in tendency. On an international level the Netherlands had maintained a neutral foreign policy, which was acknowledged by peace conferences of 1899 and 1907, held at The Hague, and later by a neutral position during the First World War.1

Thijsse was born in Maastricht in a middle-class family, the third of four sons; his father was an army officer (Fig. 2). In 1877 the family moved to Amsterdam where Thijsse trained as a primary school teacher. Following his qualification in 1883, while working as a primary school teacher, he obtained licenses to teach English, French, and German. His main interest, however, was in biology, and he had deep concerns regarding the disappearance of natural resources, the decline of environmental health, and the quality of life. In Amsterdam he was very much aware of the problems of overcrowding among the working classes, who were denied the experience of

1 Much of the material on Jacobus Thijsse has been collected at the Heimans en Thijsse Stichting in Amsterdam and the Department of Special Collections at the Agricultural University, Wageningen.

1 See B. Landheer, The Netherlands. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1944, 82.
nature. Thijsse never appears to have expressed himself publicly about any political party or movement, and in this sense he might be considered as an embodiment of the neutrality maintained by Dutch politics.

Thijsse's ideology was founded, therefore, on genuine concerns about the loss of natural areas: the drying out of the dunes through drinking water extraction or drainage for agriculture, disappearance through new infrastructure, bringing heathlands under cultivation, division of country estates for housing, the forestation of heathlands, drainage of swamps, and pollution of rivers and streams. Thijsse's definition of nature included everything which illustrated the "history of the making" of the countryside.2 His broadly liberal approach was also reflected in his attitude toward plants. His Illustrated Flora of the Netherlands included many cultivated plants, and Flowers in Our Garden included both native and foreign plants. Notably excluded from the latter book, however, were cultivars, and only some—with appropriate historic credentials—were mentioned, while modern hybrids were denounced in a subliminal manner.3 Thijsse's approach differed, therefore, substantially from that of the German National Socialists, in that he had a more international approach and was not racist.4

1. Jacobus P. Thijsse in Thijsse's Hof (from R. Tolman, Dr Jac P. Thijsse E en groot N ederlander, Utrecht, 1939)

3 E. Heimans and J. P. Thijsse, Geillustreerde flora van Nederland, 1st ed., Amsterdam, 1899; J. P. Thijsse, De bloemen in onze tuin, Zaandam, 1926; on p. 20 he notes about his own garden: "Fortunately we did not have any double-flowered sunflowers"; on p. 60 he pronounces his preferences for the wild Dutch clematis over the Clematis alpina and Clematis x jackmannii.
Thijsse's cause was twofold: to protect nature and to educate the public, and in the meantime provide better conditions and a healthier environment for all. Thus Thijsse was active in formulating most environmental and planning laws, and setting up natural history and nature conservation organizations, notably the Vereniging te Behoud van Natuurmonumenten, the Dutch equivalent to the National Trust. Thijsse's efforts toward nature conservation and particularly the dunes and their flora, might be compared to those of Henry Correvon who attempted
to protect the flora of the Alps. The scope of Thijsse's work was much larger, and while Correvon was an international figure, Thijsse acted much more on a national level, although he too was a member of international committees and attended international conferences.5

Thijsse's influences on natural history have been much researched, while other topics have as yet been neglected. This paper investigates how Thijsse, as one of the early promoters of nature and natural gardening, influenced landscape architecture. It assesses how he managed to influence a nation to accept natural gardens, and reviews the debates held over the different objectives of natural gardens by professionals, concentrating on the period up to the Second World War.

The Popularization of Nature

In the second half of the nineteenth century there was little interest in nature in the Netherlands. There remained large tracts of wild nature which were considered dangerous and undesirable. There was no tradition of appreciation of the natural environment among the population at large. General opinion advocated that these wild areas should be cleared and brought under cultivation, as an effective method of combating unemployment. As a result, large tracts of moor and heathland were brought under cultivation, and the last native forest was cleared in 1870, practically without protest. Due to this limited interest there were hardly any publications concerning native plants and wildlife, which were mainly drawn from abroad, particularly from Germany which had led the field of science since the 1870s. This meant that not only the popular works but also the more scientific ones would have been available. For instance, Thijsse would have known Darwin's works, which were translated into Dutch at an early stage, but since his foreign languages were proficient, he would have read Thomas Huxley, and Ernst Haeckel's works on evolutionary theory. The first Dutch author credited with writing a popular scientific work was F.W. van Eeden in Weeds: Botanical Journeys,6 first published in 1886.7

Thijsse's involvement as a popularizer of natural history dates from the autumn of 1893, when he met Eli Heimans (1861–1914), a Jewish primary school principal. Earlier that year Heimans had published a little book entitled Living Nature: Guidelines for Education in the Knowledge of Plants and Animals at the Primary School in Particular for Large Cities,8 which aimed to generate interest and respect for plant life and animals, and encourage the study of nature.9 In a number of sample lectures, taking the Amsterdam Sarphatipark as its case study, Heimans had shown how a lecture program might be devised throughout the year, making use of living material. Until then the study of nature had mainly been pictorial, with reference to exotic animals and plants, and Heimans' book tried to reverse this trend.

5 Thijsse was, for example, a member of the International Council of Bird Preservation from 1923 onward, and in the same year attended an international conference on nature preservation in Paris.
6 F.W. van Eeden, Onkruid: Botanische wandelingen, Haarlem, 1886.
8 E. Heimans, De levende natuur: H andleiding bij het onderwijs in de kennis van planten en dieren op de lagere school in het bijzonder voor groote steden, Amsterdam, 1893.
9 Heimans, De levende natuur, 5, 6.
This seminal publication greatly impressed Thijsse, and on meeting Heimans he asked him whether he could possibly prepare a similar book using the countryside as a resource, as opposed to a public park in the city. Heimans responded that they might do this together. This suggestion led to a long collaboration which was extremely fruitful, a new publication appearing almost every year. Intended for school children, the first of these volumes had the more general title Of Butterflies, Birds, and Flowers, but subsequent volumes in this series described different biotopes, ditches and lakes, wetlands, heathland, dunes, and forests. The response to this series of books was enormous, and in 1896 the idea was conceived to publish a magazine for amateur naturalists. For this venture they co-opted another teacher, J. Jaspers, Jr., and their magazine was christened Living Nature, with the subtitle Magazine of Nature Sport, implying that the study of nature was not just for gathering and spreading knowledge, but was also fun and exciting.

The success of the magazine in gaining a substantial readership was immediate, and the editors made it one of their aims to engage readers in different projects, encouraging them to submit articles and questions, which would be answered by the editors or other specialists. From an early period, assistance from readers was requested with research on the distribution of plant species, and when this became a success the Governmental Herbarium in Leiden used the same method in preparing distribution maps for the Dutch flora. Within a relatively short period, Living Nature became well established and a source of encouragement and inspiration from which new initiatives were being taken, such as the foundation of several natural history societies, with Heimans and Thijsse elected to their boards. To landscape architects it meant that the magazine strengthened trends toward focusing on the propagation of native plants.

In 1899 Heimans and Thijsse published the first illustrated flora of the Netherlands, with an illustration of each plant described, intended for a popular readership. This book and other similar publications at the end of the nineteenth century formed the basis of what has been termed the “biological réveil,” a reawakening of interest in biology, similar to the religious “réveil” which had taken place earlier in the nineteenth century. As early as 1900, Professor Hugo de Vries had published an article warning against the large number of students in biology, for whom there would be no employment. Additionally, in 1901 both Heimans and Thijsse started to write a series of popular weekly newspaper articles for De Groene Amsterdammer and Het Algemeen Handelsblad respectively. These articles covered a wide range of topics from biological observations, to travel accounts, notes on the nature conservation movement, and commentaries on planning proposals.

The popularizing character of Heimans’ and Thijsse’s writings was soon recognized by Verkade, an enlightened biscuit manufacturer who asked Thijsse to write the text for a promo-

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10 E. Heimans and J. P. Thijsse, Van vlinders, vogels en bloemen, Zaandam, 1894.
11 The other volumes were entitled: In sloot en plas, 1895; Door het rietland, 1896; Hei en dennen, 1897; In de duinen, 1899; In het bosch, 1901.
13 Coesel, Zinkviooltjes, 23.
14 Heimans and Thijsse, Geillustreerde flora van Nederland.
3. The title page of Thijsse’s De bloemen in onzen tuin, Zaandam, 1926, one of the Verkade albums.

The album would be sold at a bargain price and separate illustrations issued with Verkade merchandise. *Spring* appeared in 1906 and was an immediate success, ensuring Verkade’s sponsorship for some nineteen albums on natural history topics which were to be published. These albums successfully popularized nature, because they came within reach of those who otherwise would not have been able to afford or be sufficiently interested to acquire them. The Verkade albums continued to have importance after the war, and they were recommended for primary education as late as 1965 (Fig. 3).

Both Heimans and Thijsse were dedicated teachers who liked to take groups of school children on nature walks around the city (Fig. 4). The education of the younger generations and the provision of popular literature both provided efficient means for drawing the attention of large numbers of people toward nature. Thijsse also wanted to provide everyone with the opportunity to experience nature, and this led to his main and lasting achievement, the foundation of so-called “instructive parks.” Thijsse proposed that every town or district should have such a park, and calculated that large cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague should have

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16 Lente, 1906.
17 The Verkade albums varied in print runs from 17,500 (the first) to 150,000 (the last).
18 Nijkamp, “Onbekommerd,” 2. Thijsse’s efforts for education had been well recognized during his lifetime; he was given a royal decoration in 1925 and an honorary doctorate from the University of Amsterdam in 1922.
ten to twelve of these gardens. These were areas of around two hectares, where students would be able to experience nature on monthly visits throughout the year. A professional biologist would be available to lead groups of no more than fifteen or twenty students.19

In short, Thijsse provided popular support to individuals and those in guided groups. However, when a request came from the Netherlands youth society for the study of nature20 for support when they were founded in 1920, Thijsse was very reluctant. This society was based on such organizations as the left-wing Central Laborers Youth club.21 This society strove for sobriety

20 Nederlandse Jeugdbond voor Natuurstudie (N. J. N.).
21 Arbeiders Jeugd Centrale.
and asceticism and a free and mixed association between boys and girls with the intention of making excursions together, without supervision. It is likely that this rather leftish behavior did not entirely conform with Thijsse's attempts to remain neutral, because socialism was still perceived as being revolutionary in some circles. At any rate, he later amended this stance and lent his full support.  

In Germany the biologist Raoul H. Francé (1874–1943) was involved in setting up natural history societies and managed to popularize the study of nature and the appreciation of landscape by popular writings for young people, in a way which may be compared with Thijsse's work. In contrast to Thijsse, however, Francé was heavily involved in the youth movement and his work was driven by a reactionary ideology. 

Amsterdam Development Plan, the Boschplan

Thijsse's involvement in the proposals for the Amsterdam Development Plan illustrates very well how he strove for the social betterment of the working classes. In 1908 Thijsse had written a series of four newspaper articles in which he proposed a system of walks and parks for Amsterdam. The articles developed from a discussion generated by the architect H. P. Berlage's 1904 development plan for south Amsterdam, and in 1909 Berlage and Thijsse became members of a committee which studied the requirement for parks in Amsterdam. Established by the Amsterdamse Woningraad, this committee aimed to improve social housing in Amsterdam with concerns for sufficient fresh air in built-up areas and for citizens' access to parks for recreation and contact with nature. The results of the study, which compared the situation in Amsterdam with other large European cities, were published in 1909 in a report on the parks and green spaces of Amsterdam. 

This report included an assessment of Thijsse's proposals published in 1908 newspaper articles, which incorporated the area surrounding the Nieuwe Meer, the present location of the Amsterdam Bospark, in which he preempted the location of the later Bospark. Instead of a designed park in the conventional sense, Thijsse proposed natural features and vegetation, thereby setting new objectives in public park design. The Woningraad committee considered these proposals too expensive and the area too remote, however, and the plan was not realized. While Berlage was asked to resubmit plans in 1914–17, the Thijsse plans lay unconsidered, but left an awareness that something had to be done.

Thijsse's main concern was to offer everyone easy access to nature, and in a series of articles "About Laying Out Parks" he explained how that could best be done. He argued that an ideal town would have large parks along every main access route, with parkbelts which would be

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22 Coesèl, Zinkviooltjes, 143, does not provide any reason why Thijsse did not initially support the N.J.N.
24 J. P. Thijsse, "De Parken-kwestie," Het Algemeen Handelsblad, 5 January 1908 and the following days.
25 Amsterdamse Woningraad, Rapport over de Amsterdamse parken en plantsoenen, Amsterdam, 1909.
26 J. P. Thijsse, "Over Parkaanleg," De Groene Amsterdammer, 26 October 1918 and 2 November 1918.
connected radially by public gardens, loosely based on the contemporary garden city idea. In this way nature would penetrate deeply into the town, and the citizen would be offered a pleasant way to approach the countryside. This was then adapted to the situation in Amsterdam with suggestions and ideas, citing good examples from abroad and elsewhere in the Netherlands. Thijsse was of course part of a movement, and it is possible to draw a number of international parallels, for example, with Rutger Sernander (1866–1944), a professor of botany in Uppsala, whose ideas about town planning for Stockholm can be compared with Thijsse’s proposals for Amsterdam.

In 1926 Thijsse’s proposals had been adopted for the schematic plan for the development of Groot Amsterdam by A. W. Bos, the director of Public Works. Although this plan did not find general approval, it did serve in 1928 to obtain consensus for a large new park, and a general development plan for Amsterdam, which was finally adopted in 1935 (Fig. 5). By that stage a start

had already been made with the Boschplan. Thijsse was one of the members of the Boschcommissie, a committee established in 1929 to study the design and establish the diverse requirements for this new park, which in 1931 concluded that the park should have a social character intended for passive and active recreation. The following year Thijsse traveled to central Europe to study the provision of parks around other major cities—Vienna, Budapest, and Munich—and assessed how nature conservation and recreation might be reconciled. In the meanwhile other members of the committee traveled to see English public parks and the Volkspark in Hamburg.

Thijsse was asked to produce two reports on the planting of the Boschplan, one concerning the wetlands near the Nieuwe Meer and near Den Poel, and concluded that they were of significant scientific value, and that they could be maintained without great expense as a valuable "nature monument." The other report was on the topic of planting a wetland with woody plants and listed those species which were appropriate. Professor Th. J. Stomps, a family friend who had been instrumental in Thijsse's obtaining an honorary doctorate, similarly reported on this topic, as well as the temperate woodland species which would be suitable for other areas in the Boschplan. They both agreed that the natural swampland should be left as it was and that additional planting should be minimal, with some additional appropriate species.

Others had taken "natural" planting a stage further, and had proposed that new woodland should be planted according to phytogeographical principles. The promoter of this type of planting was A. J. van Laren, curator of the Amsterdam Hortus Botanicus, and author of several publications on planting design. Phytogeographical planting was defined as "the grouping of plants according to their natural communities in the countries of origin." Areas from which a suitable choice of species might be selected included those which grew in similar climatic conditions, such as Canada, the northern United States, northwest and central Europe, west, middle, and eastern Asia, and from the mountain ranges of Asia Minor, the Himalayas, China, and Japan. The northwest European wood was considered to be best suited to the local conditions and to be applied at large, while other types of plantings might be applied in smaller areas.

The final responsibility for the design lay with the Department of City Development, which was led by the modernist architect Cor van Eesteren and the town planner J. H. Mulder. Before making a decision on the design, Van Eesteren consulted the chairman of the Society of Garden and Landscape Architects, J. T. P. Bijhouwer (1898–1974), whose much-quoted response was: "I would do it myself; you will do it as well as one of us and possibly even better." Nevertheless, Bijhouwer's influence is felt throughout. In 1930 he had written a series of articles ...
in a popular garden magazine, of which the introductory essay dealt with the question of design. This article began with a brief analysis of the international significance of modern architecture in the Netherlands. He noted how foreign and national influences had been amalgamated, but not copied, in the creation of a distinct Dutch style. He noted:

The careful, ponderous Dutchman studies new influences, gathers, changes, and works until it grows into a distinct piece of art, which contains much of the good aspects of foreign influences, together with the good aspects of the old native culture. In Dutch architecture, the impulsive riotous modernism of French designs is avoided, as is the cool-reasoned, naked intellectualization of the German workers' housing; it is sober-minded and well considered, it has gained in soundness, and at the same time there is a certain cosiness, an intimacy, which is perceived as salutary.36

Looking at landscape architecture, Bijhouwer distinguished two different generally applied styles: the landscape style and the monumental style based on eighteenth-century models. Recognizing that neither of these resolved problems of modern-day usage, he indicated how German public park design had developed by creating city parks as a type of extended and improved green. He continued by observing that Dutch and American landscape architects were still without direction, with monumental symmetrical designs ill-matched to the modern asymmetrical-monumental architecture. Similarly private garden design was often matched to English examples, unsuited to Dutch conditions. Even rock gardens were laid out according to English models rather than taking local rocks as an example. On the other hand, the range of plants available had increased to a large extent and were largely unknown, and different methods were required in order to make full use of this range. Bijhouwer noted that new directions in planting according to plant geography had surfaced in the principles of Willy Lange and Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen. A full-fledged new direction had not emerged but was being sought in native art forms and nature. The cottage garden, the square, and the public park find inspiration in native art forms, the modern landscape garden in natural vegetation. Bijhouwer's slogan for a new landscape architecture was "Back to nature and native art!" In an extensive series of following articles, Bijhouwer explains these principles.

In a period in which the "English" landscape style was rejected because of the relationship with the "ancien régime" and iconographical inferences, and at the same time the symmetry and axiality of the baroque layouts were rejected as the domination of the owner over the users of the landscape, such a slogan must have been timely.37 This must particularly have been the case for a progressive, left-wing council such as Amsterdam's Thijsse's initial idea for the Boschplan appears

36 J. T. P. Bijhouwer, “Nieuwe banen,” in Onze tuinen met huis en hof 25 (1930), 5 (4–6). Bijhouwer holds a special position in Dutch landscape design in that he initially researched the relationship between vegetation and soil conditions in a doctoral thesis entitled “Geobotanic Study of the Dunes near Bergen” (1926) (“Geobotanische studie van de Berger Duinen”), and he went on to become one of the first Dutch landscape architects associated with the modern movement. He began teaching garden art at the Wageningen Agricultural University and became a reader in 1939. From 1946 to 1966 he was the professor in garden and landscape architecture, and judging from articles such as “Plant Sociology and Garden Architecture,” the application of plants was to remain one of his interests.

to have been more that of a large landscape park, such as that for which plans were first published in newspapers in 1931 (Fig. 6). Thijsse wrote about “his imagination filled with ideas of waving crowns and flowering beauty, of clear ponds and gracious serpentine lake edges.” His romantic idea and rather conservative image was roughly confronted by the reality of the first proposals for a 2.2 kilometer-long rowing canal through the northern area of the park. Thijsse soon overcame the initial shock of this proposal by likening it to other Dutch canals which were beautiful, and suggested that trees might be planted alongside it, comparing this proposed tree planting to the most famous surviving baroque allée, the Middachter Allee. Additionally he proposed how this canal might be fitted into the landscape. While reeds and bulrush had to be avoided because they would obscure the rowing boats from sight, other native plants like yellow flag, meadow sweet, yellow loosestrife, great pond sedge, willowherb, purple loosestrife, flowering rush, bur-reed, and reedgrass would be encouraged, as were waterlilies which were to be introduced near the edge (Fig. 7).

Besides the rowing canal, the other constraints within the area proposed for the park were formed by the adjoining Schiphol Airport, which required two emergency landing strips, and a deep draining hole which would serve no other purpose than being made into a lake. Taking these constraints into consideration, Van Eesteren drew an outline plan which was worked out in detail by Mulder, with great attention to levels and slopes. Appropriate slopes were not only of visual importance, but were also required to enable efficient draining so that open areas could be used for recreational purposes. Thus a park was conceived according to functional constraints, which in layout achieved purity and purpose without harking back to historical styles or German examples. This, and the type of planting, was exactly what Bijhouwer had referred to in his 1930 article, and was thus an effective example of a new national style (Fig. 8).  

Garden Design with Native Plants

During the second half of the nineteenth century the use of native plants in gardens had been encouraged by such publications as F. W. van Eeden’s Hortus Batavus: A Short Description of Native and Exotic Plants, Shrubs, and Trees Which May Be Recommended for Dutch Gardens, published in the same year (1868) in which he became the editor of Flora Batava, an illustrated Dutch

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41 F. W. van Eeden, Hortus Batavus: Korte beschrijving van in- en uitheemsche planten, heesters en boomen, die voor de Nederlandsche tuinen kunnen worden aanbevolen, Amsterdam, 1868.
The introduction of native plants into the garden generated a debate between two groups which both promoted natural design. The traditional school—which adhered to the landscape style and was represented by the landscape architect Leonard A. Springer (1855–1940)—noted that nature could not be imitated, and although the style they represented was natural, this meant a compromise between wild nature and art. As a result their designs were artful and included exotics. The artful nature had to be well maintained, well arranged, neat, and tidy.42

9. The "nature style." In this proposal for a private garden, Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen noted that this plan was "intended as a preliminary planting plan, before the layout of the walks is determined, which is the best way to indicate that not the walks, but the planting is of main importance" (from Th. J. Dinn, De Villatuin, Amsterdam, 1929, 144)

The other group was represented by the "nature style," led by landscape architects Geertruida Carelsen and H. O. Linden van Snelrewaard. They promoted the use of native plants, were against cultivars, and rejected traditional pruning regimes in order to obtain a more natural appearance. The greatest importance was accorded to the planting, and a garden would be planted prior to laying out the walks, a principle beautifully shown in a design by Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen (Fig. 9).44

By the late 1920s the debate about a new garden style had moved away from romantic and aesthetic notions, and became much more scientifically based. Planting according to plant communities was being promoted by A. J. Van Laren in a series of articles entitled "The New Garden." Van Laren had previously contributed to the discussion on the nature style, arguing that this name was unsuitable and suggesting the use of the words landscapelike and free-form layout, while proceeding to use the term nature groupings to describe different habitats that might be

43 Geertruida Carelsen, Eerbied voor het leven materiaal in de tuinkunst, Haarlem, 1902.
44 Illustrated in Th. J. Dinn, De Villatuin, Amsterdam, 1929, 140–44.
created in the garden, such as a bog garden, a rockery, a pond, and a woodland edge. In 1929 Van Laren explained the term phytogeographical plant groupings, which he had introduced some time earlier, and described their application in garden art. The next year Van Laren delivered a paper to the Royal Horticultural Society entitled “Phytogeographical Grouping of Plants as a New and More Correct Principle for the Planting of Parks, Green Spaces and Gardens.” Planting according to this principle meant that plants would be arranged by their countries of origin and according to the natural plant communities or associations. He noted that this type of planting was not just an art but also a science, and quoted as an example the Arboretum of Tervueren near Brussels.

Phytogeographical principles were proposed for the layout of the Amsterdamse Boschplan, which was a way of satisfying both the demands for and promises of an arboretum, and the nature conservation side. Thijsse had criticized this term as used by Van Laren, however, because this would not be generally understood and had suggested that the words “plant sociological” might be added to the title in order to explain the principles. This was relevant because phytogeographical planting as represented by Van Laren was not just a collection of plants from a particular country, but different countries were represented with certain plant communities or specific habitats. The application of this manner of planting was slow, and Bijhouwer pointed out the difficulties in a 1930 article, similarly to Thijsse explaining where Van Laren’s principles had been misunderstood. In general, the application of planting according to phytogeographical principles was limited, detailed information on different foreign plant communities was not really available to landscape architects, and the application was limited to use in large parks.

It may not be surprising, therefore, that in their standard work for landscape architects, Gardens (1944), G. J. Pannekoek and J. J. Schipper note that they understand that these principles apply only to plants from abroad, and that the only application they knew of was in the Zuiderpark at The Hague, which had been laid out between 1921 and 1936 according to designs by the landscape architect D. F. Tersteege and P. Westbroek (Fig. 10). After the war, planting according to phytogeographical principles was only occasionally referred to and then only in passing in such works as P. Verhagen’s, The Happiness of the Garden, where the author wrote about creating a “phytogeographical garden.”

47 In an article originally published in Onze tuinen met huis en hof 24 (1929) and reprinted as a separate publication (Phytogeographische plantengroepeering als element in de tuinkunst, Amsterdam, 1929); and earlier in an article, “Parken en plantsoenen in het uitbreidingsplan der Gemeente Amsterdam,” in Onze tuinen 22 (1927), 65–70.
48 Koninklijke Maatschappij voor Tuinbouw en Plantkunde; “Phytogeographische plantengroepeering als een nieuw en veelzins juister beginsel voor de beplanting van parken plantsoenen en tuinen.”
52 P. Verhagen, Het geluk van den tuin, Amsterdam, 1945, 157.
Thijsse's efforts to protect nature areas also influenced the younger generation of landscape architects, resulting in a consensus that foreign plants should be avoided in the Dutch landscape in order to preserve the local character. This view is most clearly expressed by Van Laren, who noted:

The introduction of foreign plants into our woods and landscapes is incorrect. The Dutch landscape, the fields, moors, and woods should be kept floristically as pure as possible. Foreign plants are out of place. The purpose of new plantings should be to retain the character of the native flora. Foreign plants are intended for the garden.

The possibility of exceptions should remain open for foreign plants, woody plants as well as herbs, whose character is fully adapted to the native flora, and thereby the inclusion of precious characteristics, which may provide profit, such as is the case with the different deciduous and coniferous trees, and also some herbaceous plants.54

It would be tempting to draw parallels in political terms with regard to the liberal attitude toward foreigners in the Netherlands, who are well accepted when they try to fit in with the population, particularly when profitable. This is also very much like what Willy Lange suggested in his *Garten Design in Modern Times*, which would probably have been read by Van Laren.55 It would be somewhat naive, however, to equate any ideology that these two men may have had. Van Laren had similar views to Thijssen and was much concerned with the well-being of the lower classes. He saw the aim of the phytogeographical parks he proposed as the education and enjoyment of the Dutch population, noting that this type of park would be a better educational resource, have more character, and be more attractive than a traditional park.56

By the late 1930s landscape architects were preoccupied with different forms of natural planting, owing to the influence of Thijssen and others. Pannekoek and Schipper distinguished five different ways of grouping plants in a garden. The most common manner was the “mixed aesthetically and physiologically correct grouping,” where due care and attention were given to the conditions of the garden, the soil, and to form a harmonic whole. The second manner distinguished was “grouping according to plant communities,” for example, heath and woodland vegetation, dune flora, peat, and moorland vegetation. The third manner was the “phytogeographical planting,” which the authors considered suitable for only the largest parks and gardens. The fourth group, the “systematic grouping of plants” where plants were arranged in family groupings, was rarely applied, and was particularly suitable for arboretums and larger parks and gardens. The last manner they distinguished— notably excluded from the first edition of their book in 1939— was “groupings of wild plants,” which was distinct from the grouping according to plant communities by its scale and application.57

While the first manner was a mixture of scientific reasoning and aesthetic, artistic sense, the second, third, and fourth were wholly based on scientific principles. The newly added method of groupings of wild plants, however, lacked scientific or aesthetic references and might be considered as a romantic notion. Bijnhouwer, in his influential 1930 articles, had excluded any reference to romantic ideas of nature and had made no mention of the nature style of Springer, Carelsen, and Linden van Snelrewaard, presumably because they were not scientifically based. The inclusion of romantic ideas about planting in the revised editions of Gardens may signify a nostalgic return to the prewar years.

At the same time as Pannekoek and Schipper first devised their different ways of grouping plants, J. T. P. Bijnhouwer, in his inaugural lecture on becoming a reader in landscape design at the

55 Willy Lange, Garten gestaltung der Neuzeit, Leipzig, 1922, 164.
56 Van Laren, Onze tuinen 22 (1927), 70.
57 Pannekoek and Schipper, Tuinen, 2:85–94.
Wageningen Agricultural University, discussed “The Problem of Plant Grouping.” In this lecture he observed the modern trend of landscape architects to exclude exotic plants, and argued how these might be included while still retaining the natural character. This was illustrated by two different schools; the first one, initiated by Willy Lange, was based on “physiognomy,” that is, “the external character of the plant as it is determined by its living conditions.” The second system was initiated by Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen in his books Trees and Shrubs in Parks and Gardens (1908) and The Ornamental Garden (1920). His ideal was not to arrange plants according to their external character, but to select those plants that occur in the temperate zone in similar plant communities.

In this context it is interesting to assess the position of Lange’s publications, which were widely read by Dutch landscape architects. In an article entitled “Willy Lange’s Last Book,” A. H. Haarsma van Ooop assesses Lange’s position as a result of the publication in 1928 of his final book, Garden Plans. Lange is depicted as an embittered man, disillusioned because he has not been able to win his battle for a “landscape style with planting after nature motifs.” Disapproving of the way Lange offends his colleagues by relating the prevalent rectilinear style to that of the “southern (French) bastard peoples,” the author concludes:

> It is with sadness that we find a surprise on the last page of his book Garden Plans. As a personal gift of the author we find his autographed portrait. Willy Lange! I fear there won’t be many of us who will thank you openly for your life’s work. Let us not join in hatred. Love for beautiful nature, love for delightful flowers, that love connects Lange with all of us. We will think of him in kind memory, the fearsome, too fearsome fighter. Because we know that it was his great love which forced him, love, soaked with sadness.

Some six years later Haarsma van Ooop reports on the change of climate and the fact that Lange has just been given an honorary professorship and a silver cross. The disastrous German economic climate had altered the position of Lange’s publications. His proposals for “new connections of the German people to the German soil” and the “reinstatement of the German character in park and garden design” became suddenly viable in finding solutions for unemployment and other problems with “biological plant associations, settlements in the countryside, racial problems, the German landscape, and German love for German soil.” Haarsma van Ooop congratulated Lange for being finally recognized by his own people, noting that: “We hope that the German group will regain communal harmony in the European garden and will come to peaceful cooperation with other groups, so that the whole may form a community, mutually strengthening and supporting, mutually cooperating and achieving a better human society.”

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58 J. T. P. Bijhouwer, Het vraagstuk der plantengroepeering: Rede uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van lector aan de Landbouwhoogeschool te Wageningen op 30 November 1939, Wageningen, 1930.
59 Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen, Boomen en heesters in parken en tuinen, Zutphen, 1908; De Siertuin, Zutphen, 1920.
his article Haarsma van Oucoop provided a critical understanding of the political significance of Lange's proposals, which were not projected on the Dutch situation.

In Bijhouwer's lecture, held just before the beginning of the German occupation, there was no reference to any political message in relation to Lange's system, and the only criticism of him was that he took his own system too far, something Bijhouwer referred to as "a derailment." Bijhouwer would undoubtedly have shared Haarsma van Oucoop's and Springer's feelings. The latter appeared to warn his readers in his 1936 Bibliography of Garden Art, stating that "Lange's publications are certainly worth reading, but one should keep in mind from which influence they have been written." Bijhouwer himself summarized the prewar debate on planting design in a 1951 article entitled "Plant Sociology and Garden Architecture," in which he wrote that landscape architects were in general against the "National Socialist propaganda in favor of the German wood as a starting point for plant selection, with which German-minded garden architects bothered us," showing that he certainly was aware of what was going on politically, but that he had initially chosen to ignore this in favor of a scientific approach.

In Germany the prewar use of native plants was associated with nationalistic tendencies and a Nazi ideology. The Dutch were careful to avoid any such associations, and the nature lobby of which Thijsse was part seems to have been fairly careful not to declare any political inclination. In the case of Thijsse, for example, it is possible to establish ideology only by inference; a political orientation is not discussed in contemporary writings nor in biographies. The character of the Verkade albums has sometimes been described as "sublimated nationalism" by Rienke Tolman, who defined it as:

A nationalism which does not require any big or bombastic slogans, but a refined form of a conscious and inner love for the beautiful and familiar country; for the landscape with its animals and plants, its clouds, sun and wind, its atmosphere and changeable weather, its people, which, united in language and historically associated, form a living close community.

In this Tolman was of course referring to the nationalistic developments in neighboring Germany, which served to unite different cultures which had not been historically associated. The sublimated nationalism emanating from the writings of Thijsse was simply a reflection of pride: the Dutch people were proud of their country and proud of being Dutch, and did not have an identity crisis. The roots of the identity of the Netherlands could clearly be found in the Golden Age, the seventeenth century, when Dutch society had been a model for tolerance, harmony, and wealth. After the French period in the early nineteenth century, the Dutch adopted a very liberal constitution, which benefited from trade with other nations and cultures. The nationalism as practiced in Germany obviously clashed with the Dutch philosophy, and German politics were—justifiably—seen as a threat.
In those instances where only Dutch plants were selected, as by Thijsse in his Plant and Bird Garden in Bloemendaal, this was for ecological rather than political and nationalistic reasons. The aim of this garden was to raise the general concern about the Dutch dunes and to aid their conservation by educating the general public about its plants and wildlife. As in a reserve, he

67 Thijsse’s Hof was started in a conventional nineteenth-century manner as a “Planten- en vogeltuin” ("Plant and bird garden"); a design for such a garden by the landscape architect D. Wattez (1883) is included in Bonica Zijlstra, Nederlandse tuinarchitectuur, 1850–1940, vol. 2, Amsterdam, 1987, 26.
attempted to grow all the species of the dune flora as reported to be growing in the region in F. W. van Eeden’s Weeds (1886). For this reason Thijsse proposed that this garden be referred to as “Van Eeden’s Hof” in acknowledgment of the author, but this was rejected by others through connotations with the Garden of Eden. At the opening in 1925 it was christened “Thijsse’s Hof” (Fig. 11).

Thijsse’s Hof was laid out in an old potato field surrounded by some coppice, covering a total area of about two hectares. The design by Leonard Springer was reminiscent of one he produced in 1918 for a school garden in Haarlem (Figs. 12, 13). Besides regular beds for individual students, these school gardens often included small areas dedicated to wildflowers. Thijsse’s Hof incorporated different physical conditions simulating those in dune landscapes, while at the
same time manipulating the space. A pool was dug below groundwater level and the sandy soil covered with a layer of topsoil in order to prevent wind erosion. The whole area was sown with grass and weeds which germinated and had to be weeded out. At least five years were thought to be needed before the garden would display the vegetation of the dunes.\footnote{Springer’s original design was published in the Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant, 23 December 1924, 1; see also J. P. Thijsse, Een jaar Thijsse’s Hof, Amsterdam, 1943, 6.}

The execution of the layout was carried out by Cees Sipkes (1895–1989), who ran a nurs-
14. Thijsse’s Hof on a spring morning, 1995, showing an artificial dune on the far side of the pond area (photo: L. Pattacini)

15. Thijsse’s Hof on a spring morning, 1995, showing a walk along the woodland edge (photo: L. Pattacini)
In 1918, before starting his own nurseries, Sipkes had been director of the herb gardens of Walcheren in Oostkapelle. In the period after the war, the former nurseryman Sipkes emerged with a career as a landscape architect; his wild plant nursery had been destroyed by the German occupiers, and even before the war he had designed and laid out gardens as part of his nursery practice. One of his larger commissions before the war was the Stekelhoeksduin estate in 1932, where he recreated a dune landscape with a pool. From 1945 to 1960 he was employed as a landscape advisor for the administrative body that managed the coastal dunes in Voorne. In this capacity he laid out the Tenellaplas near Rockanje (1949–50), a recreation of a natural dune landscape of about three hectares, with the same purpose of education as Thijsse’s Hof. Sipkes very much took the position Thijsse had previously occupied as a key figure in the field of biology, as he was also a prolific writer of popular articles. After his retirement he was able to further his career as a landscape architect with projects in the Netherlands and abroad; these included Biovakantieoord Bergen, N.H., Liniehof, Made, N.B. (1978), Heemtuin Piershil, Z.H. (1979), and Grand Paradiso in Turin (Natura 75 [1978], 190–94; Gorteria 12 [1985], 251–54).

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well-known Swiss nurseryman who started the Jardin Alpin nursery in order to prevent the digging out of alpine plants. By having plants available from a commercial source, the Swiss government felt able to prohibit collecting by individuals.\footnote{J. P. Thijsse, in De Groene Amsterdammer, 18 September 1919.} In 1927 Sipkes, inspired by his work with Thijsse and Fokker, also expressed his interest in landscape architecture by republishing a special issue of the magazine Natura entitled “Native Plants in Garden Architecture.”\footnote{Wilde planten in de tuinarchitectuur, reprinted from Natura 12 (February 1927).}

Thijsse’s Hof was an immediate success and was frequented by generations of school children, and still functions very much in the way it was proposed by Thijsse (Figs. 14–16). Thijsse’s Hof found a great following, and many parks have been designed in its style. One of the first was De Heimanshof in Vierhouten, named after Thijsse’s late partner. This was laid out in 1935 by the Laborers Youth Club,\footnote{Arbeiders Jeugd Centrale.} initiated by another teacher, Henk van Laar, as a project for young

17. The Scientific Garden in the Zuiderpark, The Hague, laid out between 1933 and 1935, was also intended for primary education (from P. Bakker Schut et al., Groen en bloemen in Den Haag, Den Haag, 1936, 92)
unemployed people. Like Thijsse's Hof, this garden was to be used for education and was to contain the flora of the Veluwe. The layout followed designs by the landscape architect G. Bleeker, Springer's former assistant and nephew. It is noticeable how much this garden laid out by a socialist organization related to Thijsse's Hof in design concept and purpose, and provides evidence that Thijsse's ideas were readily adapted by different political directions.

In the Zuiderpark at The Hague a Scientific Garden was laid out between 1933 and 1935 where plants were arranged according to the different Dutch plant communities. Designed by landscape architect A. J. de Gorter-ter Pelkwijk (b. 1911), the garden was laid out next to children's school gardens, and was specially intended for those in primary education (Fig. 17). Some of the best known other examples are probably De Braak in 1939 and the Westelijk Bovenland (later renamed Jac. P. Thijssepark) in 1940 in Amstelveen to the east of the Amsterdamse Bos, both designed by C. P. Broerse, with the assistance of J. Landwehr (Figs. 18, 19). A recent survey calculated that there were about 170 such gardens in the Netherlands.

In 1941 Thijsse introduced the term instructive park in order to describe gardens like Thijsse's Hof, stressing their educational value. In 1946 the term heempark was introduced by the landscape architect C. P. Broerse with the advice of H. J. Scharp, historian and town councillor of Amstelveen. The word hem means approximately "environment, yard, (home)." These words were soon distinguished from each other, and heempark was defined as "an area in which landscape architecture is conducted with the assistance of wild flora," while "in an instructive park the aim is to provide a representation of the natural plant communities." The term instructive park has now been lost in popular everyday usage.

Experimenting with Wildflowers

We have seen how Thijsse influenced the professional world of the large-scale planning of Amsterdam, the location of the Bospark, and the way it was planted. Thijsse also encouraged landscape architects to use wildflowers, and they took up the challenge and did so in many different ways, sometimes due to foreign influences. The movement to use wild plants was an insular movement, however, and contemporary book reviews indicate a surprise that similar developments were happening elsewhere. Reference to German and English publications was mainly by professionals and the educated middle classes.

In his texts Thijsse encouraged ordinary Dutch people to use wildflowers and to conserve them. He set an example by writing about his own gardens in Amsterdam and Bloemendaal, which were filled with wildflowers. When Thijsse moved to Bloemendaal in 1902, he made it
18. One of the best-known “heemparks” is the Jacobus P. Thijssepark in Amstelveen, which was begun in 1940.

19. Another view of the Jacobus P. Thijssepark in the town of Amstelveen, where Thijsse's dream of a network of instructive gardens surrounding a major town became a reality.
a point to conserve in his garden all the local plants which he had observed, many of which were then threatened, later applying the same principle in Thijsse’s Hof.83 His popular Verkade album The Flowers in Our Garden (1926) ended with the rhetorical question: “Why not a Dutch garden with treasures from our own flora?”84 In an article entitled “A Garden with Wildflowers,” published the following year, he once again promoted the idea, but warned against digging up wildflowers and noted that such gardens also required a considerable amount of work.85 Thijsse was never dogmatic about the use of wildflowers and included garden plants in his writings.

One publication encouraged by the movement toward more wildflowers, influenced among others by Thijsse, was a popular book published in 1935 entitled Wildflowers and the Application in Our Garden, by J. M. Houten, which arranged plants according to their plant communities, and was an indicator of the general interest in the topic. This book was written for those who wanted to reserve some corner in their garden for wildflowers, or for those who lived in a house near a nature reserve where the garden was required to be integrated with its surroundings. Once again Van Houten noted the difficulty of establishing wildflowers and the need to experiment with positioning.86

The scientific side of experimenting with wildflowers was led by botanical gardens, particularly the curator of the Hortus Botanicus in Amsterdam, Van Laren, but from 1930 there were also trials at Hortus De Wolf in Haren, the new botanical garden of the University of Groningen, where E. Laarman became curator.87 In the Hortus in Leiden, experiments in establishing plant communities were organized by W. C. de Leeuw, and in Wageningen the specialist was Professor Jeswiet. The latter two served as advisors for the layout of the Scientific Garden in the Zuiderpark at The Hague.88

As noted above, landscape architects were in the forefront of experimenting with wildflowers and natural groupings, and Geertruida Carelsen was one of the prime motivators. Contrary to what was being promoted by William Robinson in England, whose wild garden was defined as the naturalizing of ornamentals, the Dutch concept of a “wild” garden was based on natural associations, the plant communities.89 Robinson’s meaning of “wild garden,” when applied, was generally misunderstood and used to describe overgrown and neglected gardens or otherwise contained ornamental plants which would not naturalize.90 The influence of the Robinsonian wild garden seems to have been minimal in the Netherlands, and the main influences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries originated from Germany. The idea of the Dutch garden with natural planting evolved from a scientific base, the study of nature, biology, plant sociology, and so on, while the Robinsonian wild garden developed as a reaction against a conventional way of practical gardening.

84 Thijsse, De bloemen in onze tuin, 90.
86 J. M. van Houten, Wilde planten en haar toepassing in onze tuin, Rotterdam, 1935.
89 This is particularly clear from Th. J. Dinn, De villatuin, Amsterdam, 1929, 143.
By the time Thijsse promoted the creation of flower meadows for purposes of picking flowers, landscape architects had already been experimenting with these. K. C. van Nes had sown flowering meadows when the road from Heiloo to Egmond was being laid out in the late 1920s, and along areas of the motorway Rijksweg 50 when that was being laid out in 1939. Working with meadow plants formed a relatively easy solution; J. P. Fokker showed how it might be applied in his own gardens at the estate De Koers in Wassenaar, and John Bergmans wrote about them in *Meadow Plants of Middle Europe* (1940).

Bijhouwer, together with Van Nes, served as members of the prewar Roadside Planting Committee, which aimed to provide a critical review of roadside plantings in the Netherlands. One of the recommendations of the committee regarding the planting of roadsides was that "with both trees and shrubs, only those species which fit into the landscape ought to be used. Exotic species can only rarely be selected." The final choice therefore included only a few exotic species. This is in total contrast to the advice of the English Beautifying Association, in *Roadside Planting* (1930), which advised the planting of extensive lists of ornamentals.

The increasing influence of Thijsse can also be shown well in the work of the landscape architect Mien Ruys. Writing before the war, the title of one of her books was *Borders: How They Are Created and Maintained* (1939), but by the time the book was first reprinted in 1952, the author expressed her concern that much had changed since writing the initial volume. By the time she was asked to revise the book in 1959, she had not only changed the title to *The Use and Care of Perennials in Our Garden*, but almost its entire contents. A border was only one way to apply perennials; there were many other possibilities. One of the additions was in an introductory section on the differing starting points for the use of perennials, with a chapter entitled "taking nature as an example," in which the examples of Thijsse's Hof, Thijssepark, and Hortus De Wolf were discussed. This is just one example of Thijsse's continued posthumous influence after the war, which still remains to be surveyed.

**Conclusion**

Thijsse was a product of his time, and from his actions it is possible to detect an ideology based on genuine environmental concerns. Unlike neighboring Germany, where specific ideas about ecology became connected with National Socialist ideology, Thijsse tried to retain the well-established Dutch neutrality, and with his publications encouraged regionalism. His life's aim was to conserve nature, and thus regional identity, by educating the public. Thijsse was also a practical man, not a philosopher, and does not appear to have expressed political or ideological views in public; indeed, when Thijsse is described as a sublimated nationalist, this can simply be considered as an expression of his Dutch pride. It is possible to detect foreign and national influences in his work regarding his ideas on town planning, nature conservation, and the pro-

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91 Thijsse, Natuurbescherming en landschapsverzorging in Nederland, 104.
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motion of wild plants in gardens. He was unique in the way in which he popularized nature and made this available through mass publications.

The influence of Thijsse on landscape architecture in the Netherlands has been considerable, not only with regard to those projects with which he was directly engaged, such as the twentieth-century extension of Amsterdam and his participation in the laying out of the Amsterdamse Bos and Thijsse's Hof, but also for the ideas he transmitted through his writings. He influenced landscape architects to think differently about planting and about the function of parks. Landscape architects took up the challenge in different ways, the younger generation saw it as an opportunity to rationalize garden design by discarding the romantic values of the older generation and basing planting on scientific models. The use of native plants is now regarded as normal rather than exceptional. Ecological parks and gardens, directly deriving from his idea of instructive parks, can now be found in all corners of the country. And, even more important, he showed how a whole nation might be educated to protect the natural landscape and natural parks.